UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FORTY-NINTH SESSION

Official Records

FIFTH COMMITTEE
22nd meeting
held on
Tuesday, 22 November 1994
at 10 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 22nd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. TEIRLINCK (Belgium)

Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. MSELLE

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 108: PROGRAMME PLANNING (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 105: REVIEW OF THE EFFICIENCY OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL FUNCTIONING OF THE UNITED NATIONS (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 113: HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT (continued)

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Distr. GENERAL
A/C.5/49/SR.22
14 December 1994
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: FRENCH

94-82443 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 108: PROGRAMME PLANNING (continued) (A/49/6, A/49/16 (Parts I and II), A/49/99 and Add.1, A/49/135 and Add.1 and Corr.1, A/49/452; E/1994/19 and E/1994/4)

1. Mr. HAHN-FEILER (Germany), speaking on behalf of the European Union and Austria, said that monitoring and evaluation were in many ways as important to the planning process as preparation and budgeting. It was therefore essential that the Organization should enable itself to measure the concrete results of its numerous programmes and activities through an evaluation process based on result indicators. Such a process was of paramount importance, because most United Nations programmes and activities were partly financed through voluntary contributions and donor countries were becoming more and more insistent on knowing how their contributions were used.

2. Although they would have liked to see the Secretary-General's report on the programme performance of the United Nations for the biennium 1992-1993 (A/49/135 and Add.1) written in more precise language, the European Union and Austria supported its recommendations. The aim of the report was to evaluate the extent to which the various units of the Secretariat had realized their programme objectives ("outputs"). In that regard, he questioned the relevance of treating services to deliberative organs as "outputs" and hence as evaluation criteria.

3. The Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) had recommended on a number of occasions that the formulation of the Organization's objectives should be improved. It was necessary, however, not only to improve the formulation of objectives, but to focus the process on the relevant programmes. Therefore, the European Union and Austria unreservedly supported the recommendation in paragraph 37 of the report to terminate 173 outputs carried over from former bienniums.

4. The core of the agenda item under consideration, however, concerned the proposed revisions to the medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997. Although the bulk of the work of CPC at its thirty-fourth session had been devoted to those revisions, the results were not completely satisfactory, in part because the Secretariat had been unable to provide the necessary documents within a reasonable time-frame, which had greatly complicated the task of CPC. There was no acceptable excuse for the Secretariat's failing to produce its key documents in good time for Governments to give them serious consideration. The delegations he represented hoped that the reforms being instituted in the structure of the Secretariat would bring about a noticeable improvement in that situation.

5. It was highly important to enhance coordination between all United Nations human rights bodies. The European Union and Austria trusted that rationalization in that area would result in increased effectiveness of those mechanisms and a better use of existing resources. They looked forward to presentation of the detailed report mentioned in paragraph 35.51 of

document A/49/6 (Prog. 35) on improving existing protection and monitoring mechanisms. Since the purpose of the medium-term plan was to guide future budget planning, it would have been desirable for the plan to refer to the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action on human rights endorsed by General Assembly resolution 48/121. Given the importance accorded to human rights, the delegations he represented would be bringing up the subject of increasing resources to protect human rights during the debate on the relevant budgetary issues.

6. One of the greatest failings of the medium-term plan in its current form was that it did not constitute a user-friendly management tool. Without a succinct statement of the objectives of the programmes for which programme managers were responsible, the new system of accountability would be impossible to apply.

7. It would also be desirable to establish a link between the budgetary process and the new structure of the medium-term plan and a correlation between the programme budget structure and the medium-term plan.

8. Document A/49/301, containing a prototype of a new format for the medium-term plan, was among the most important documents that had come before the Committee in recent years. It represented a courageous attempt to simplify the format of a document that had become increasingly complex and obscure.

9. The medium-term plan should be a concise, basic strategic document, focused on the main tasks of the Organization and concerned with long-term trends. The European Union and Austria shared the opinion of the Nordic countries regarding long-term trends and therefore felt that the plan should cover a period of six years.

10. Mr. LOZINSKY (Russian Federation) said that his delegation shared the widespread view that the current system of programme planning was imperfect and required substantial improvement. If the planning system was unsatisfactory, the medium-term plan could not fulfil its function as a basic strategic document defining the broad policy outlines of the Organization, nor could it serve as a useful framework for preparing programme budgets. His delegation welcomed the proposed new format for the medium-term plan, comprising a general policy document ("perspective") and a programme framework, covering a four-year period. It was pleased that the emphasis would be placed on objectives and the means of attaining them rather than on detailed descriptions of activities and outputs, as in the past. Clear definition of objectives and results obtained should make for better programme evaluation. In addition, congruence between the structure of the plan and the structure of the Secretariat should make it easier to discern the responsibility to be assumed by organizational units for their programmes.

11. The new medium-term plan should be a concise forward-looking policy document, comprising two parts, the first dealing with the broad priority areas of the Organization and the other with the major programmes. At the same time, the plan should not become an obstacle to implementing new categories of

priority activities or prevent the elimination of obsolete programmes and projects or the dismantling of structures that were no longer appropriate. It should be designed as a flexible management tool that would allow the Organization constantly to review its structure and make the necessary adjustments.

12. The Russian Federation welcomed the proposed programme budget outline for the biennium 1996-1997 (A/49/310). For the first time in that context the Secretariat had provided for specific measures for redistributing resources to activities of increasing importance. Such efforts should be actively encouraged, because redistribution of resources was in essence the only way to divert funds from obsolete or ineffective activities. His delegation noted with satisfaction the intention of the Secretary-General to optimize the efficiency of the resources employed and place the emphasis on results. The savings achieved through better management should be redirected to priority areas. At the same time, as the Secretary-General pointed out in paragraph 10 of his report, one must not forget that the budget outline had been prepared on a minimum-requirements basis and that the new mandates might require additional resources.

13. The proposed revisions to the medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997 by and large reflected recent decisions taken by intergovernmental bodies and international conferences. Since they had already been considered by CPC and by the other Main Committees, his delegation had no difficulty endorsing them.

AGENDA ITEM 105: REVIEW OF THE EFFICIENCY OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL FUNCTIONING OF THE UNITED NATIONS (continued) (A/49/16 (Part II), A/49/34, A/49/98, A/49/336, A/49/418, A/49/423, A/49/449, A/49/471, A/49/560 and A/49/632; A/C.5/49/1 and A/C.5/49/28

14. Mr. DJACTA (Algeria) said that the United Nations had been obliged to embark on a far-reaching administrative and budgetary reform during a particularly difficult period of acute financial crisis, and at a time when it had to carry out a series of increasingly numerous, urgent and diverse mandates that were conferred on the Organization by the Member States. That was undoubtedly a mark of the international community's continuing confidence in, and expectations of, the Organization; but there was a risk that those expectations would be disappointed if the serious imbalance between what was expected of the Organization and the pace at which the reforms were introduced were to continue.

15. The restructuring process should not be an end in itself. Its dynamic nature should make it possible to establish lines of responsibility between the different structures and to maintain a balance between the various sectors which the Organization had to satisfy.

16. Referring to the Secretary-General's decision to ask the Administrator of UNDP to help him to ensure the coherence of the policies of the United Nations and the global coordination of operational activities for development, he recalled the Ministerial Declaration of the Group of 77, adopted at its

eighteenth annual Meeting, at which the Ministers had stressed the need for institutions that were involved in implementation of financial and technical cooperation programmes to be distinct from those involved in overall policy-making and coordination. The reform of the Secretariat should in no way jeopardize the satisfactory implementation of the activities and programmes decided on by the Member States in the resolutions of the General Assembly. The necessary staff and resources should therefore be deployed in accordance with the decisions of the Member States within the framework of the appropriate organs, in order to enhance the capacity of the United Nations system to respond in the most appropriate way to the new development requirements.

17. His delegation took note of the report of the Secretary-General on the restructuring of the Secretariat and of the situational constraints which had made it difficult to submit a report analysing all aspects of restructuring, in particular its impact on programmes. His delegation was aware that too little time had passed since the introduction of the restructuring measures for in-depth evaluation to be possible and hoped that a further report would deal with the impact of the restructuring process on the programmes of the Organization and with the measures taken to tailor the restructuring to the decisions of the competent intergovernmental bodies.

18. Having always considered that Member States should ensure that they were able to verify that the United Nations acted in conformity with its mandates, his delegation welcomed any initiative designed to rationalize, strengthen, and extend oversight by the Member States of the activities of the Organization and of the sound management of its resources. The establishment by the Secretary-General of the Office for Inspections and Investigations has certainly been a positive step in that direction. The report issued as document A/49/449 rightly highlighted the improvements made to the functioning of the Organization and drew attention to the lack of serious disciplinary measures in cases involving blatant mismanagement. It was in that spirit that Algeria had joined the consensus to adopt resolution 48/218 B in which the General Assembly institutionalized the system of internal oversight services.

19. The proposed system of responsibility and accountability provided an appropriate framework for the emergence of a new management culture within the Organization. But it was also necessary to establish means of encouraging the diligent performance of duties and of penalizing inefficiency and lack of good will. In that connection, Algeria had made a contribution by appointing an expert to the ad hoc intergovernmental working group responsible for reviewing the jurisdictional machinery and procedures for the sound management of the resources and funds of the United Nations.

20. In conclusion, he emphasized that the human resources of the Organization were a decisive factor in the improvement of its administrative and financial efficiency. Greater emphasis should therefore be placed on the in-service training of personnel, which should include awareness training on fraud and misconduct within the Organization.

21. Mr. TOMMO MONTHE (Cameroon) said that the efficiency of the Organization should be regarded in a broader perspective in order to identify all its components. Its efficiency depended on its administrative underpinning, on the quality of the staff it employed, on the financial resources available to it and on the dynamics governing the type of relationships it had with other international organizations, in particular the Bretton Woods institutions, transnational corporations, non-governmental organizations and above all States, the most powerful of which exercised a crucial influence on the conduct of world affairs. Any assessment of the restructuring undertaken by the Secretary-General could therefore only be provisional, particularly in view of the uncertainty prevailing in the closing years of the century, which had highlighted the inadequacy of traditional concepts and criteria.

22. It might be asked, at the current stage, how the restructuring should be judged and what instructions should be given to guide the future action of the Secretary-General. In the first place, his delegation invited the Secretary-General to take into account the contribution of the African States, in particular the Ministerial Declaration which the Group of 77 had adopted at its eighteenth annual Meeting on the subject of the United Nations reforms. At the methodological level, the Ministers had called for the adoption of a global approach designed to maintain the balance within and between the principal organs of the Charter. They had insisted on scrupulous respect for the Charter, particularly its provisions concerning the decision-making mechanisms and the sovereign equality of States. They also advocated the democratization of procedures and respect for the principles of universality, justice and equity in the functioning of the Organization.

23. Bearing in mind the serious situation in Africa and the desire, frequently expressed by the international community and by the Secretary-General, to remedy it, it was essential to establish an appropriate high-level department to ensure the implementation and follow-up of programmes meeting the development concerns of Africa, and to include a separate section in the regular budget of the Organization for the funding of activities under those programmes. Those were reasonable demands on which action could be taken with little delay.

24. In the political field, his delegation noted the promising start made by the new Departments responsible for political affairs, peace-keeping operations and humanitarian affairs. In that connection, his delegation hoped that programmes relating to preventive diplomacy, peace-making and assistance to Member States in those fields would be strengthened. The Central Organ of the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution of the Organization of African Unity or the Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, were eminently suitable organs for offering such assistance.

25. As far as administration and management were concerned, his delegation particularly appreciated the new structure of the Department of Administration and Management. It welcomed the efforts made to provide a clearer delimitation of responsibilities, to merge audit, inspection, monitoring and verification functions, and to strengthen training and retraining. The Secretary-General hoped, moreover, that senior United Nations officials would familiarize

themselves with the new concepts of responsibility and accountability, which stimulated the imagination and were conducive to creativity.

26. In the economic and social field, his delegation believed that the reforms undertaken still fell short of the stated objectives. For instance, the declared intention to strengthen the regional commissions and turn them into integrated regional centres of the United Nations had still to be adequately reflected in reality. In that connection, the new process recently set in motion by the Secretary-General should be encouraged. His delegation welcomed the initiative of the Secretary-General with regard to the decentralization of energy and natural resources, and hoped that the decentralization process would extend to other areas (including transport and industry) so that the regional commissions could play an appropriate role. In particular, the recommendations contained in the report of the Joint Inspection Unit on the restructuring of the regional dimension of United Nations economic and social activities (A/49/423) should be fully implemented.

27. With regard to coordination in the economic and social sectors, the elimination of the post of Director-General had not been satisfactorily offset by the creation of ad hoc mechanisms, which could only offer infrequent coordination that was limited to the Organization and focused exclusively on general policy. There was no ideal solution. The Secretary-General and his colleagues should, however, keep the issue under review and, if necessary, consider reverting to the system of a Director-General.

28. In conclusion, he welcomed the measures taken to strengthen the United Nations presence at Vienna and Nairobi.

AGENDA ITEM 113: HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT (continued) (A/49/176 and Add.1, A/49/219 and Add.1, A/49/406, A/49/445, A/49/527 and A/49/587; A/C.5/48/37 and Add.1 and A/C.5/48/45; A/C.5/49/5, A/C.5/49/6 and Corr.1 and Add.1, A/C.5/49/13, A/C.5/49/14 and A/C.5/49/32)

29. Mr. WANG Xiaochu (China) said that many of the measures proposed in the report entitled "A strategy for the management of the human resources of the Organization" (A/C.5/49/5) struck right at the heart of the problems in the management of the Secretariat, such as those relating to the strengthening of the policy and planning functions of the Office of Human Resources Management, the performance appraisal system, training, staff mobility and cooperation with Member States in the field of recruitment. Those measures would certainly help to improve internal management and enhance efficiency. At the same time, his delegation realized that certain issues required further study and that the implementation of a number of measures, not to mention the development of a new management culture, would require even greater efforts. It hoped that the process set in motion by the Secretariat with a view to modernizing the human resources management system would produce concrete results and go beyond reports, resolutions and programme budgets. In that connection, the Secretariat should actively seek the support and cooperation of both Member States and the staff.

30. As peace-keeping operations had increased dramatically in the past few years, the civilian staff recruited from outside the Organization had become an important component of the human resources of the Secretariat. His delegation therefore held the view that the Secretariat should in future report to the General Assembly, under the current agenda item, on the composition and utilization of that category of personnel.

31. His delegation noted from documents A/49/527 and A/49/587 that the situation of women in the Secretariat had gradually improved since 1990. That was an encouraging development. The target of 35 per cent which had been set for the representation of women by 1995 was, however, still far from being met. Greater effort on the part of the Secretariat was therefore needed. The problem of the under-representation of women was the legacy of hundreds or thousands of years and long-term efforts would be required to redress that social inequity.

32. As a country that had sustained casualties through its participation in United Nations peace-keeping operations, China shared the grave concern which other Member States had expressed with regard to the safety and security of personnel. It hoped that the draft convention recently adopted on that question by the Sixth Committee would contribute to the safety of personnel participating in such operations.

33. Another important personnel issue, which had been left pending, was that of desirable ranges. At its forty-seventh session, the General Assembly had decided to establish an open-ended Working Group of the Fifth Committee to consider the formula for the determination of equitable geographical representation of Member States in the Secretariat and had requested the Chairman of the Committee to report to it thereon at its forty-eighth session. His delegation noted with regret that the question had not even been considered at that session. As indicated in document A/49/527, during the period from June 1992 to June 1994, the number of staff members holding posts subject to geographical distribution had decreased by 58, whereas during the same period, there had been an increase of 241 staff members in the Secretariat in the Professional category and above. While the percentage of unrepresented and overrepresented countries had decreased slightly, the number of underrepresented countries had increased. He noted that the essential point of desirable ranges was to ensure equitable geographical distribution in accordance with the principle reflected in Article 101, paragraph 3, of the Charter. That principle was not in contradiction with the other principle set out in the Charter, namely the necessity of securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity in the Organization. On the contrary, the two principles should complement one another. China was firmly convinced that people qualified to work for the United Nations could be found in all Member States.

34. As for the relationship between the various types of contracts in the Secretariat, his delegation pointed out that, while permanent contracts provided the United Nations with a stable workforce familiar with its tasks, fixed-term contracts could attract equally qualified people who would give it the flexibility to adjust to the ever-changing demands. It was therefore important

to maintain a proper ratio between staff members on permanent contracts and those on fixed-term contracts.

35. Mr. KAZEMBE (Zaire) said that issues relating to the deployment, utilization, training and security of human resources had long been recognized as central to the effectiveness of the United Nations in its quest to respond to urgent and long-term needs. Deployment meant that personnel should be available in those places and areas where it was most needed; utilization related to the fact that the duties assigned to the staff should be in keeping with the purposes set forth in the Charter of the United Nations; training related to the fact that international civil servants should have the necessary tools and skills to carry out their duties; and security meant that international civil servants should not be impeded in the performance of their assignments.

36. With regard to recruitment, he noted that Zambia had always supported the Secretary-General's efforts to make the United Nations a truly international body in terms of its staff members. To that end, his delegation supported measures to reduce the number of unrepresented and underrepresented Member States. As noted in document A/49/527, paragraph 36, that problem was being addressed to some extent. His delegation pointed out, however, that the authorities should continue to monitor levels, particularly for posts subject to geographical distribution.

37. Despite the long-standing targets set by the General Assembly, the percentage of women employed in the United Nations system, especially in senior posts, had not increased significantly. Further efforts should be made to recruit more women, while respecting equitable geographical distribution.

38. His delegation was fully in favour of the decentralization measures proposed by the Secretary-General. Zambia felt that such measures would improve the pace of United Nations activities. It emphasized, however, that increasing the powers of station and programme managers also entailed more responsibility, corresponding resources and greater transparency. The introduction of a new performance appraisal system in the United Nations was also a worthy initiative. No matter how much the appraisal system was perfected, however, it would be ineffective if the users did not handle it with proper understanding and care. The Secretary-General had announced his intention to encourage staff mobility. That was a positive, long overdue step. Many regional commissions would benefit from the new international approach.

39. Zambia welcomed the many proposals aimed at reforming the internal system of justice in the United Nations Secretariat. They would help to rationalize, simplify and streamline the administration of justice. While Zambia was in favour of the appointment of legal officers to assist staff members who needed counselling, his delegation stressed that such counselling should be performed in a cost-effective manner.

40. In view of the ever-increasing number of duty stations throughout the world, it was becoming more and more difficult to ensure the security and safety of United Nations personnel. The increasing number of situations of conflict

and the need for United Nations intervention called for new rules and practices in that regard. His delegation sincerely believed that the new convention on the safety and security of United Nations and associated personnel should be drafted and adopted as a matter of urgency.

41. Mr. PHANIT (Thailand) said that human resources remained the Organization's most important asset. For the United Nations to succeed in carrying out its difficult mandates and responsibilities, a competent and highly motivated core of international civil servants was a necessity. Thailand therefore felt, together with other delegations, that the strategy proposed in document A/C.5/49/5 on the management of the Organization's human resources was an important element in the broader process of reform currently in progress. Thailand agreed with the Secretary-General's observation that planning was an essential tool for anticipating and meeting staffing and managerial needs, and for helping the Secretary-General and the Secretariat to fulfil their ever changing mandates. His delegation hoped that the availability of the Integrated Management Information System would help to increase the effective functioning of the Office of Human Resources Management. The new performance appraisal system would also improve the management of human resources. However, as other delegations and the Joint Inspection Unit had noted, its successful implementation would be difficult. Objectivity, transparency and fairness must be ensured in order for the new system to be implemented successfully. Staff participation and involvement were also essential.

42. His delegation noted that the Department of Administration and Management and the Office of Human Resources Management intended to decentralize many functions and to delegate greater authority to programme managers. Thailand hoped that the results would correspond to the stated goals.

43. United Nations personnel must be well trained. In that regard, Thailand was pleased to note, in document A/49/445, that training activities had been reoriented to face new demands, such as sustainable development and peace-keeping operations. The strengthening of training programmes to support the new information technology infrastructure and the adoption of a centralized budgeting approach to training activities by the Department of Administration and Management were also excellent initiatives. In the firm belief that the Organization's efficacy was directly related to the quality of its staff, his delegation would advocate an increase in funding for training, notwithstanding the planned budget increase for the 1994-1995 biennium. The United Nations spent less than 1 per cent of its staff costs on occupational and management training, which was too little for an organization of its size. Staff morale was another important factor. Accordingly, Thailand hoped that the proposed reform of the internal system of justice would further enhance staff-management relations.

44. The Secretary-General's report on improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat (A/49/587) pointed out that only relatively modest progress had been made in that area and that the targets for percentages of women in Professional and higher-level posts would not be met by 1995. His delegation deplored that fact and was particularly concerned that only 14 per cent of senior posts were

held by women. Thailand hoped that the Secretary-General and the departments concerned would seriously take up the many useful suggestions made by the Joint Inspection Unit in its report (A/49/176).

45. The safety of United Nations staff members and personnel serving under the aegis of the United Nations in the field was another matter of concern. Thailand deplored the growing number of fatalities among those personnel. It therefore strongly supported the efforts of the Sixth Committee to elaborate a new convention dealing with the safety of United Nations and associated personnel.

46. Lastly, his delegation expressed its support for the Secretary-General in his efforts to modernize the management of human resources and to effect a change in management culture.

The meeting rose at 11.45 a.m.